

# Kyodan

*Kyodan News Letter*

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## CHRISTMAS

Whenever I think of Christmas I always have one thought. Are we conscious of the real meaning of Christmas, that is, Christmas as the birth of Christ? When we look at the commercializing of Christmas we freely criticize the fact that it is a celebration without the true meaning of the birth of Christ, but are we anymore aware of Christmas as the Birth of Christ and His presence in the world and in history?

Whenever we are faced with problems and difficulties we deal with these situations as if He were not present therefore do we not become panic stricken and uncertain in our actions and say things that really ought not to be said?

The birth of Jesus Christ, that is, 'God is with us' this is the secret of the world and of history. "He who did not spare His own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?" Paul wrote this expressing from the bottom of his heart his astonishment and thankfulness for this fact. Furthermore Luther said, "the Christian is a Prince above all things and therefore he is servant of none, yet at the same time the Christian is a servant of all therefore he obeys all", here we can say that the Christian is a man of freedom.

These words of the fathers of our faith challenge us but we are thinking earthly thoughts and we are concerned with getting along in this world, therefore the words of these men cause us much distress because to us they are unbelievable.

The truth of the Gospel is a new discovery to those who have entered the faith and yet it is daily a new astonishment for we can never say that we know all this truth.

Christmas is a revelation. Jesus Christ has been born and is present in this world--Christmas is a celebration of this fact.

The world, history, life with the problems common to all is open to this fact just as any door is opened. Let us with joy look at the Light shining in that doorway.

Masahisa Suzuki  
Moderator  
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No.20--December 20, 1967

### CHRISTMAS ON THE GINZA

(the following article was written by the pastor of the Ginza Church which stands at a main intersection of downtown Tokyo.)

Today, as I look at the Christmas decorations I am reminded of a story popular twenty years ago in Japan. One day near Christmas a barmaid seeing the many decorations of Christmas adorning the front of her bar said to a neighboring pastor, "do you also observe Christmas at your Church?"

Ten years ago after I had become pastor of Ginza Church, one of the leading figures of Japan Christendom came to me and said, "my wife and I were going to worship at your Christmas Eve Candelight Service but because the Church was so crowded we were refused admittance. Your ushers serving under your direction were told that when the church and halls were filled to refuse admittance to all regardless of how great they might be. It is the only time that I have been refused admittance to a Japanese Church."

At that time on Christmas Eve the streets were crowded with strollers and at the sound of the Church bell they rushed and soon filled the 850 seats spilling out to the halls and doorways. Of course, this happened only once a year. Those standing in the halls would call for the sanctuary doors to be opened for the Candelight Service was very quiet and could not be heard over the din coming from the streets.

During the past 10 years a change of emphasis has come concerning Christmas. Not only in the Church but the secular world as well have urged the Japanese people to spend 'Christmas at home'. Therefore, we do not see the crowds of people on the street on Christmas Eve but the Churches are just as full and are holding meaningful Christmas Services.

The Christmas Season finds many concerts of Handel's Messiah and these are all well attended. Ginza Church offers a concert of sacred music for its Christmas Eve Service--the offerings which amounts to several hundreds of dollars are used for Welfare Work.

Christmas is a time when the people of Japan are made aware of the Birth of Christ and the Church endeavors to gear itself to take advantage of this opportunity to proclaim, 'CHRIST IS BORN'.

### A PROFILE

Little Ken's funeral was held prematurely. Immediately following the war when housing in Japan was very difficult to come by a young ventriloquist found a room in a pastors home. He earned his living by appearing at the 'story teller's hall' with 'little Ken' his helper in ventriloquism.

While living in the pastors home he attended evangelistic meetings held by Rev. Kagawa and became a Christian. He felt that as a Christian he should lay aside his talent and concentrate on becoming a minister. He graduated from Japan Biblical Seminary and for 10 years pastored Shinmaruko Church. Receiving an overseas scholarship he studied in the USA and while there saw many American







No. 20--December 20, 1967

pastors using other talents along with being a pastor. He saw counselors, scientists, teachers, etc., why should he not use his talent as a ventriloquist to proclaim the Word?

'Little Ken' was resurrected. Today while serving as pastor of Shinmaruko Church he is also known as 'Shunpu' (spring wind), his professional name, when he is appearing as a ventriloquist.

Ichiro Nado, the pastor, when appearing as 'Shunpu' realizes that this is also an opportunity to witness while he works. Therefore, he is unashamed to include in his dialogues references to the Bible and to the Christian faith.

#### CHRISTMAS GIFTS TO OKINAWA

"Let us send Christmas gifts to our friends of the Okinawa Church."

These are words of an appeal of the Christian Education Committee of the Kyodan to its church school children for a drive to raise 2,000,000 yen (\$5,555.00) in order to send needed things in the work for children and young people to churches of the United Church of Okinawa at its request at this Christmas time.

Every year at Christmas, the Committee takes up a project of benevolence and ask all Church schools of the Kyodan for their cooperation. Last year nearly 80,000 children contributed 1,525,193 yen (\$4,366.00) to donate 35 organs and kerosene stoves to 37 rural "preaching points" in the western part of the country.

Okinawa is the name given to the largest island in a chain of 40 small islands floating in the sea between the southern tip of Japan and Taiwan. There is the largest and strongest military base of the U.S. Forces in the Far East on Okinawa. Okinawa is under the control of the Civil Administration of the U.S. Forces even though it is a part of Japan by an agreement between both nations. Okinawa is therefore a predicament to people of Japan.

A negotiation is now going on between the Okinawa Church and the Kyodan to unite in the Fall of 1968. Except for a few, most of the churches of the United Church in Okinawa are small in attendance. However, they do a good work for children and young people. To carry out these works effectively they greatly need music instruments and audio visual materials. The response from Church schools throughout Japan to this drive is great. It is expected that the Church School children of the Okinawa church and those of the Kyodan will be united in their fellowship through this project and that their experience will promote the educational works of both churches.



